



Rich Gulch Trail



Low clouds linger on Shasta Bally in this view from Rich Gulch Trail.

FEATURES

Difficulty Level: Moderate

Length: 1.8 miles one way

Vistas of Shasta Bally Mountain

Second growth forest

This trail connects to Brandy Creek Falls Trail

TRAILHEAD DIRECTIONS

(via Brandy Creek Falls Trail)

Starting at the Whiskeytown Visitor Center, drive south on Kennedy Memorial Drive towards Whiskeytown Dam. The road forks. Continue on the right fork, crossing over the dam. The paved road winds around the lake to the Brandy Creek Beach area.

Turn left on Shasta Bally Road which turns into a dirt road. Drive up the road about 2.5 miles towards Sheep Camp. Turn left at the junction of the road to Sheep Camp/ Shasta Bally. The left fork leads to the Brandy Creek trailhead.

After approximately 0.75 mile, look to the right for a small parking area. The trail head is up the road, about 150 feet distant.

TRAIL DESCRIPTION

The trail can be hiked from either end, this guide describes the trail beginning from the Brandy Creek side. Hike the Brandy Creek Trail for about 0.75 mile to connect with the Rich Gulch Trail.

The Brandy Creek portion of the trail is an old logging road that crosses over the ridge into the Brandy Creek drainage.



1950s era Shasta County log truck.

This was a major haul road for loggers in the 1950s as the forest was logged for ponderosa pine and Douglas fir. The trail provides some vistas of Shasta Bally mountain along the way. Black bear are commonly seen in this portion of the park.

The Rich Gulch Trail joins the Brandy Creek Falls Trail on the left, about halfway to the lower falls. The trail is mostly shaded in second growth forest. Continuing on, the trail will cross over Rich Gulch Creek. It eventually ends at the Brandy Creek Falls Road. Turn left to walk up the road and return to the parking area.

Extensive erosion can be seen on the old logging road which was never engineered or maintained after the loggers took the timber and left. The legacy of the passing timber industry is seen in abandoned skid trails, failed culvert crossings and inboard drainage gullies that have contributed to extensive erosion. Over 300 miles of abandoned logging and mining roads exist throughout Whiskeytown National Recreation Area.

Today, the National Park Service and volunteers are rehabilitating these old roads into trails. By improving grades and controlling erosion, the natural contours and drainages are restored to pre-logging conditions. Some old roads like the Rich Gulch Trail will be converted to hiking trails for the public to enjoy.

Douglas Fir, An Important Species

Douglas fir is one of the most common tree species at Whiskeytown. Its name, Pseudo-tsuga menziesii, refers to the fact that it is not what it appears to be. "Pseudo" refers to false and "tsuga" to hemlock. There was some controversy when scientists first tried to classify this tree. Its flat needles are similar to a fir, but the cones are more like spruce cones and not at all like those of the fir. Botanists finally decided it was most closely related to the hemlocks.

Douglas Fir is one of the largest and most valuable timber trees in the world. It is the source of more lumber than any other species of tree in North America. Its rapid growth, longevity and thick, corky bark make it fire resistant. It is also home to various plants and animals that cannot live anywhere else.

Archibald Menzies of Scotland, physician and naturalist, discovered the tree now called Douglas Fir in 1791 on Vancouver Island, British Columbia while on a British exploration expedition. David Douglas, Scottish botanist, rediscovered the tree during one of several journeys made to North America between 1823 and 1834 to study American plants. He was one of the earliest travelers in the Oregon Country and California.



SAFETY

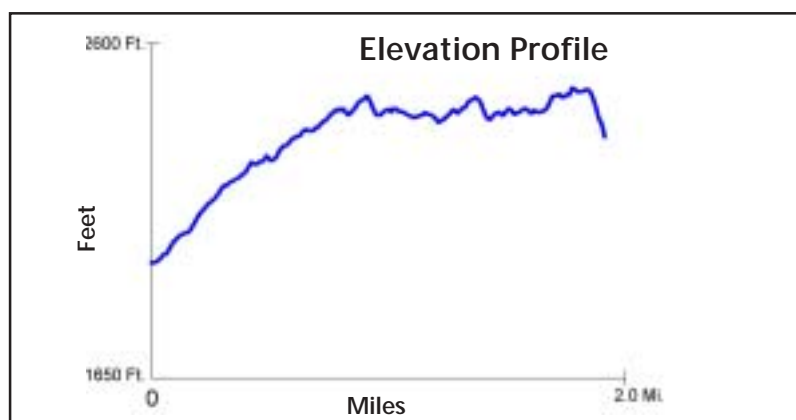
Hikers should stay back from steep edges along canyons and watch for slippery rocks while crossing streams.



Showy Phlox (*Phlox speciosa*)



Yellow Violet (*Viola lobata*)



Douglas Fir Cone (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*) found along the trail.